

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7312

INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 5471

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, GT, UK, BH

SUBJ: BELIZE

REF: GUATEMALA 5332

1. WHEN PRESIDENT LAUGERUD MENTIONED BELIZE DURING MY CALL ON HIM YESTERDAY, I TOLD HIM THAT I HOPED FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA HAD SPOKEN TO HIM ABOUT MY CONVERSATION WITH HIM ON AUGUST 22 AT SECRETARY VANCE'S REQUEST AND OF THE POINTS I HAD MADE TO HIM. PRESIDENT SAID THAT MOLINA HAD INDEED BRIEFED HIM, AND HE WENT ON TO REPEAT TO ME THEIR PLANS TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO LONDON IN ADVANCE OF MOLINA'S MEETING WITH ROWLANDS IN THE U.S. IN SEPTEMBER.

2. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT OUR DECISION TO SETTLE THE PANAMA CANAL ISSUE WAS A WONDERFUL AND ENCOURAGING EXAMPLE, AND IF THE BRITISH WERE ONLY ABLE TO FOLLOW THAT EXAMPLE HE WAS CONVINCED THAT BELIZE COULD BE SETTLED WITHOUT BLOODSHED. HE DID NOT WANT BLOODSHED; HE DID NOT WANT ANOTHER ANGOLA. BELIZE COULD BE SETTLED, HE SAID, IF BRITAIN DID NOT TRY TO HUMILIATE GUATEMALA.

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3. I SAID I THOUGHT THEY HAD REACHED A POINT WHERE, IF BOTH SIDES WERE FLEXIBLE, A SETTLEMENT COULD BE REACHED WHICH WOULD NOT INVOLVE HUMILIATION. I SAID WE WERE PERSUADED THAT THIS WAS THE BEST TIME TO SOLVE THE BELIZE DISPUTE. WE HAD COME OUT OF A SERIOUS CRISIS AND WE WERE NOW CONCERNED THAT IF SETTLEMENT WERE DELAYED AGAIN, THERE

WOULD BE THE DANGER OF A NEW AND MORE SERIOUS CRISIS WHICH MIGHT NOT BE SO EASY TO DEAL WITH NEXT TIME. I SAID WE WERE CONVINCED THAT HE AND HIS ADMINISTRATION WERE IN A STRONGER AND BETTER POSITION TO DEAL WITH THIS ISSUE THAN HIS SUCCESSOR MIGHT BE.

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE SO AND SAID HE WANTED TO SETTLE BELIZE; HE SAID THAT THE BELIZE PROBLEM COULD HAVE BEEN SETTLED THIRTY YEARS AGO AND IT WOULD HAVE SAVED BOTH SIDES A LOT OF TROUBLE.

5. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE FROM SEPTTEL THAT PRESIDENT LAUGERUD INTENDS TO USE HIS BILATERAL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER PRIMARILY TO ARGUE MERITS OF GUATEMALAN POSITION ON BELIZE. HIS REMARKS TODAY AT LEAST SUGGEST SOME RECEPTIVITY TO THE ARGUMENT THAT HE IS IN A BETTER POSTION TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE THAN HIS SUCCESSOR WILL BE AND THAT, FOR THIS REASON AMONG OTHERS, NOW IS THE TIME TO WIND UP THE BELIZE DISPUTE.

BOSTER

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